

BOOK REVIEW

PEGGY KOCHANOFF. 2009. **You Can Be a Nature Detective**. (ISBN 978-087842556-3, pbk.). Mountain Press Publishing Company, P.O. Box 2399, Missoula, Montana 59806, U.S.A. (**Orders:** www.mountain-press.com, info@mtnpress.com, 1-800-234-5308). \$14.00, 63 pp., 9" × 8 3/8".

You Can Be a Nature Detective is a great little book for parents, teachers, grandparents, and any others interested in spending time with children out of doors. It begins with an attention-grabbing opener ("Hmmm... there's spit all over the grass. Who could have done it?") and proceeds to answer or solve this and other outdoor "mysteries." Although some of these mysteries are only found in limited geographic regions (say, where an actual snowy winter occurs), all are wonderfully engaging and entertaining. Through the process of solving nature riddles (Why are the leaves changing colors? Will that creepy crawly thing turn into a butterfly or moth? What's that fuzzy stuff on the ground?) the author has highlighted 12 different visual clues that can be further investigated by a curious child. A detailed explanation accompanies each mystery and these are further enhanced with beautiful watercolor illustrations.

At the end of the book are some additional "Fun Things to Do in Nature" (each related to one of the former mysteries), such as counting different frog calls, making prints of spider webs, and dissecting owl pellets, as well as a glossary and list of suggested resources. Despite the fact that it is written at an age-appropriate level for kids to read and enjoy, I see *You Can Be a Nature Detective* more as a vehicle for an adult to spend quality time in nature with a child. It's a ready-made, go-to source for those times when the kids are saying, "I'm bored!" a source that no parent or grandparent should be without.—Palmer Byerley, *Elementary Science Teacher, Crowley, Texas, U.S.A.*

Ms. Kochanoff's book is part field guide and part nature journal. It offers good information about a variety of plants and animals with well-executed watercolor illustrations. However, contrary to the title, the reader doesn't have to be a detective at all when the answers to the questions asked are immediately given. She doesn't make it clear if the reader is participating in real hands-on outdoor investigations as a "nature detective" or just reading another informational nature field guide. A good concept but is lacking in engaging mystery.—Pam Chamberlain, *Botanical Research Institute of Texas, Fort Worth, Texas 76102-4025, U.S.A.*